DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 517 CG 027 806

AUTHOR Taylor, Ella L.; Rossmiller, Hilda
TITLE The Effect of a Single Gender Leadership Program on Young Women.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Females; Intervention; *Leadership Training; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Secondary Education; *Self Esteem; Student Attitudes; *Youth Leaders
IDENTIFIERS Gender Training

ABSTRACT

Leadership education has shown the effectiveness of identifying and developing leadership skills in adolescents. This is especially important for adolescent girls, who often attribute success to external forces rather than themselves. To meet this need, an overview of the design, goals, activities and impact of a university-sponsored, two-week residential leadership program for young women is examined here. The program is designed to expose young women to the historical, sociological, and political impact of women leaders so as to help participants develop self-confidence and ownership of leadership skills and talents, and to help them persevere in carrying out tasks requiring leadership skills. After describing the challenges faced by young women, a detailed description of the program is offered. Program evaluation was measured with an attitude questionnaire administered on the first day of the program, followed by another questionnaire administered four months after program completion. Women from around the state (N=52) participated in the program. Survey results were grouped under three headings: increased awareness of the need for women in leadership positions, encouragement of the girls to seek opportunities for leadership positions, and improved self-confidence. Analysis of the responses indicated that all three areas were positively affected. (AJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 408 537

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
E. Taylor
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The Effect of a Single Gender Leadership Program on Young Women

Ella L. Taylor & Hilda Rosselli

Department of Special Education
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Ave., HMS 421
Tampa, FL 33620-8350
(813) 974-3410

ETaylor@tempest.coedu.usf.edu
Rosselli@tempest.coedu.usf.edu

Paper prepared for delivery at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March 24-28, 1997, Chicago, IL.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG027806

The Effect of a Single Gender Leadership Program on Young Women

Introduction

Leadership education has shown the effectiveness of identifying and developing leadership skills in adolescents. This is especially important for adolescent girls who, unlike their male peers, often attribute success to external forces rather than themselves. A single gender program designed to expose young women to the historical, sociological and political impact of women leaders could provide support for young women's talents by helping them to develop self-confidence, ownership of leadership skills and talents, and perseverance in carrying out tasks requiring leadership skills. This paper will provide an overview of the design, goals, activities and impact of a university sponsored two-week residential leadership program for young women.

Background

The scope of changes surrounding today's youth necessitates educational programs that specifically address the leadership skills needed to live and lead in a world of change. Such programs are needed for students who demonstrate giftedness in the interpersonal domain that Gardner (1983) describes as most frequently found in individuals who inspire others through their skills of communication, decision-making, forecasting, and problem-solving. Schools traditionally relegate leadership education to experiences that include student council, debate classes, or high school level executive internship programs. A need exists for additional opportunities, outside of a school setting, to develop and refine leadership talents. Our ten years of experience in administering university-based leadership programs for adolescents has shown the effectiveness of identifying and developing leadership skills in young adolescents (ages 12 and up). At this age, gifted students are often seeking answers to ethical issues, searching for both autonomy and cooperation, and eager and excited to further develop specialized interests and skills (Buescher, 1991). They often have a heightened sensitivity to the world around them and are more introspective than their age-mates.

Although girls often outnumber boys in gifted elementary classes, the numbers reverse dramatically in middle and high schools. Furthermore, the number of gifted girls and women declines with age (Silverman, 1993). The middle school years, in particular, witness a profound drop in girls' self-esteem (Gilligan, 1991; Reis, 1991; AAUW Education Foundation, 1992). Whereas gifted boys attribute their

accomplishments to effort, gifted girls attribute their accomplishments to external forces and not to themselves. Such self-defeating attitudes may result in an enormous loss of talent for society.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) identify early adolescence as a crossroads in women's lives which they compare to the crossroads young boys face in their differentiation process from their primarily female caretaker. In a study of six, nine, twelve, and fifteen year old girls, they view the movement of young girls into adolescence as a time of "disconnection, sometimes of dissociation or repression in women's lives, so that women often do not remember -- tend to forget or to cover over -- what as girls they have experienced and known" (p. 4). Documenting the movement of young girls from vibrant, outspoken individuals with strong senses of self to individuals who incorporate "I don't know" into everyday discourse with continued frequency, Brown and Gilligan stress the importance of women joining young girls at the "crossroads" of adolescence in order "to strengthen girls' voices and girls' courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonant relationships, and in this way to move with girls toward creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society" (p. 6).

In her landmark study of moral development, Gilligan outlines the "different voices" males and females use to address moral dilemmas. Those with a care perspective (generally women) focus on the interpersonal relations of care, responsibility, and interdependence, while those with a justice perspective (generally men) focus on abstract rights and separateness. Women, due to the sexual division of labor and our socialization as women, see the world as a web of relations. Men, for the same reasons, see the world as separate and governed by abstract notions of justice and rights (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1981; Ruddick, 1987). Both a justice and care perspective may have profound implications for decision-making within leadership contexts.

McCormick and Wolf (1993) outline the importance of intervention programs for gifted females in science and mathematics. They suggest three criteria to evaluate program effectiveness:

- encouragement of nontraditional career choice for women in math and science;
- changes in attitudes toward math and science; and,
- improved self-confidence and self-esteem.

A single gender intervention program designed to: inform gifted females about the importance of leadership in their lives, engage women and adolescents in honest

conversation and relationship, and to expose young women to the impact of women leaders may provide the support for these young women's leadership talents. Our approahces were specifically aimed at helping them to develop self-confidence, ownership of leadership skills and talents, and perseverance in carrying out tasks requiring leadership skills.

Description of the Program

The University of South Florida Summer Leadership Program for Young Women is an outgrowth of over ten years of university sponsored leadership programs for adolescents. Prior to 1995, all programs were provided in a coeducational environment. Based upon the unique interests of the staff resulting from an exploration of the literature regarding gifted girls, it was decided that a leadership program was particularly needed for young adolescent women who often are struggling with their own perceptions of ability and expectations for success.

The 1995 program identified four primary outcomes which were as follows:

- students will be able to analyze the connection between women's lives and the structure of society, work, family, politics and history as well as discuss the impact of sex-role socialization on the future;
- students will be more knowledgeable about theories of leadership, their own leadership profiles, and specific skills that effective leaders use;
- students will be more experienced in planning, carrying out and evaluating their success in group tasks; and,
- students will become personally aware of the many aspects of leadership in various career areas.

Lectures, panels, field experiences, films, simulations and readings comprised a curriculum designed to combine the aspects of leadership studied in the program with the students' personal interests in one of three focus areas: 1) politics and community action; 2) business and the professions; and 3) arts and sciences. Within each focus area the students explored individual women's contributions and leadership skills as well as how these skills worked within and across structures. Students were also afforded the opportunity to individually spend a day with a woman leader in the field of their choice. These women included lawyers, physicians, politicians, corporate executives, accountants, media specialists, university faculty and administrators, medical researchers, and entertainers.

Students were able to select one of seven committees through which to practice leadership skills such as goal setting, time management, group decision making, and cooperation. Each committee was responsible for a certain aspect of the program such as development of the program journal, local hero award, and a multimedia and slide show presentation for the annual "open house" for parents (see Figure 1 for a more complete description of committees).

Guest speakers presented students with information pertaining to time management, organizational skills, goal setting, decision-making, stress management, and maintenance of self-confidence. Students also experienced a day-long "challenge by choice" outdoor program designed to foster positive group dynamics, team building, problem-solving, and increased self-esteem.

Program staff were comprised of elementary, middle and high school teachers enrolled in a gifted education master's program at the university. All staff were Caucasian and female with the exception of one male. Two high school juniors (one Caucasian, one African-American) were utilized as junior counselors. All staff and participants resided on one floor of a university dormitory and ate in a common cafeteria, thereby creating a potentially fertile environment for "resonant relationships".

Methodology

Procedure

An attitude questionnaire was developed and administered to the participants on the first day of the program. This questionnaire was designed to ascertain the students' beliefs regarding leadership, perceived inequality within society, gender roles and future aspirations. Four months after the completion of the program another questionnaire was developed and administered to measure the self-perceived impact of the program on the students' awareness of the need for women in leadership positions, willingness to seek opportunities for leadership positions, and increased self-confidence. A similar questionnaire was administered to the young women's parents to validate the students' responses.

Participants

Fifty-two young women representing all ethnic, socio-economic and regional groups were chosen from around the state to participate in the program based on teacher recommendation, demonstrated leadership ability and/or potential, and high academic ability as demonstrated by qualification for a district gifted program or high

stanines. Three-quarters (77%) of the participants were white, 15% African-American, 13% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Participants' ages ranged from 12 to 16 years of age; they were entering seventh through tenth grade. One-third of the students qualified for program scholarships based on economic need. A total of 20 young women responded to the follow-up mail questionnaire; 22 parents responded.

Results

Respondents were surveyed regarding their beliefs about leadership, perception of inequality in society, and perceptions about gender roles in society on the initial survey. They were also asked to indicate the importance of several qualities in making a person a good leader. Participants' responses reflected the importance of maintaining an ethic of nonviolence or "care" in which a balance is achieved between being responsible to self and being responsible to others. Almost all respondents (96%) felt that "a concern with encouraging everyone involved in a decision to express their ideas and opinions" was very important. In contrast, less than one-third (28%) felt it was very important "to convince people to do something that they initially might not be inclined to do."

Almost half of the survey respondents (41%) indicated they saw a great deal of gender inequality in society; one in four (23%) perceived race/ethnic inequality. Generally, respondents indicated it was just as important for a wife to have a career as a husband and that neither sex needed to neglect their spouses to be successful. However, 41% disagreed that men and women have equal rights in society.

Four months after completion of the program, participants and their parents were surveyed to ascertain self-reported impact of the program. Each of the 20 follow-up questionnaires were analyzed along with the parent questionnaires to determine the participants' self-perceived impact of the program. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with eight items addressing:

- self-confidence
- leadership skills
- interest in world affairs
- interest in women's issues
- empowerment to feel they could address and impact issues they were concerned about
- sense of ethics
- overall impact of the program, and

- impact of program on expectations of self.

Parents were also asked to indicate agreement with these items in relation to their daughters. Of the 20 participant responses and 22 parent responses almost all indicated either strong or moderate agreement with each of the items.

An examination of strong agreement among participants reveals the following prioritization: 1) positive impact of program on expectations of self; 2) positive impact of the program overall; 3) improved leadership skills; 4) increased interest in women's issues; 5) empowered to feel they could address and impact issues they were concerned about; 6) positively impacted sense of ethics; 7) increased self-confidence; and 8) increased interest in world affairs. Parent responses reflect a similar response pattern with a few exceptions. Parents, like their daughters, most highly ranked the positive impact of the program on expectations of self. However, unlike their daughters' sixth place ordering, parents ranked an increased sense of ethics as second in terms of strong agreement. Table 1 indicates percentages of strong agreement with each item for both participants and their parents.

To further understand the participants' strong agreement regarding the program's positive impact on self expectations, we examined their open-ended responses to how the program impacted them. Their responses reflect the importance of adult and adolescent women connecting to form "resonant relationships" that strengthen girls' voices and courage.

Commented one tenth grade respondent who was a student council officer, student organization officer and a sports team captain, "The program improved my self-esteem and gave me the courage to try new things. The program was a motivator. I no longer put limitations on myself. I can do anything I set my mind to."

An eighth grade student council officer, student organization officer and sports team captain responded, "After completing the program, I now see myself as a self-confident, assertive person who is to be listened to and taken seriously. I now expect myself to speak up and be someone who people want to follow and look up to as a leader."

"Being a perfectionist, I already had extremely high expectations for myself. However, I learned that I can now impact and control many more aspects of life rather than just my schoolwork," stated another eighth grade student council officer.

An eighth grade class officer, student organization officer and sports team captain reported, "I have a very much increased self-esteem. Now that I know I can do above average work, I expect myself to reach the excellence level in my work, academics and sports. "

A tenth grade class president, student organization officer and community club officer indicated, "The program taught me to always reach for the best, finish what you start, believe in yourself and others, and to be a better person in whole. I have better expectations of myself now. I can do anything I want."

Parents similarly reflected upon their daughters' perceptions about the program's impact. The parent of a tenth grade student council member commented, "It helped her eliminate the limits previously set for herself in her own mind." Stated the parent of a tenth grade student organization officer, "[my daughter] seems to have more confidence about being able to achieve her goals. She has always had high aspirations but sometimes was unsure if she could reach them. Now, she seems to tackle them with assurance." Similarly, the parent of an eighth grade community club officer shared, "sometimes the most subtle approach has the greatest impact. I believe [my daughter] found 'direction' from the program. I have since seen a report on discrimination that was beautifully written using her resources from the Leadership Program."

Discussion

With slight modification, we can apply McCormick and Wolf's three criteria for science and math programs to our leadership program. The modified criteria are as follows:

- increased awareness of the need for women in leadership positions;
- encouragement of the girls to seek opportunities for leadership positions; and,
- improved self-confidence.

By examining each criteria individually we can begin to assess the impact of the leadership program on young women.

Increased awareness of the need for women in leadership positions

Throughout the curriculum students were exposed to women's leadership contributions in business, politics, science and the arts. Within each context students explored women's historical as well as current contributions. Students were encouraged to discuss the impact of sex-role socialization on societal contributions as well as to analyze the connection between women's lives and the structure of society. Each of the three focus areas consistently utilized gender as a lens through which to examine positions of leadership and women's leadership roles. One assignment within the business and professions focus area asked the participants to compare various occupations by sex within the local phonebook. Another assignment in the

politics and community action area prompted discussion through viewing *The Fable of He and She*, a film which humorously uses claymation to examine the sexual division of labor. An arts and sciences focus area assignment involved attending a local art museum noting the representation of women artists and women's representation in the paintings. Responses to the four month follow-up questionnaire by both participants and their parents reveal participants' increased interest in women's issues, world affairs and a positively impacted sense of ethics as indicators of the program's success in increasing awareness of the need for women in leadership positions.

Encourage participants to seek opportunities for leadership

Through the variety of program committees, the outdoor "challenge by choice" activity, seminars on group dynamics and leadership styles, and Shadow Day, participants were afforded numerous opportunities to develop and refine their leadership abilities in a safe environment for risk taking. Both participants and their parents reported improvement in their leadership skills, a sense of empowerment to address and impact issues they were concerned about, and a positive impact on self-expectations. As can be seen from their open-ended comments participants "...have better exceptions of self . . . . can do anything". Parents' comments seemed to corroborate with their daughters' perceptions, "it helped her eliminate the limits previously set for herself in her own mind".

Self-confidence

A variety of activities within the program provided the participants with opportuntities for successful decision-making. Accomplishing the committee tasks allowed the young women to "reclaim lost voices" and begin to eliminate "I don't know" from their conversation. Access to women leaders, in conjunction with the program's focus on self-esteem through seminars and the outdoor "challenge by choice" workshop, encouraged the participants to reflect upon their personal choices. By providing a safe psychological environment in which to practice appropriate risk-taking, the young women were empowered to replace "I don't know" with "I can do anything I want".

The intensive two-week structure of the program provided ample opportunity for the development of meaningful connection between the adult women staff members and the adolescent women participants. The opportunity to work, live and eat together created an atmosphere conducive to not only verbal sharing, but also role modeiing of friendship, conflict resolution, and perseverance in carrying out tasks which require

leadership skills. As Brown and Gilligan (1992) discuss by creating "resonant relationships" between girls and women, adolescent women are afforded an opportunity to maintain rather than silence their voices. Both participants and their parents reported strong agreement that the program increased self-confidence. Consistently, the participants responses reflect the importance of maintaining connection through having an impact, speaking up, believing in self, and expecting excellence.

Conclusion

Although insufficient time has elapsed to conclusively measure the impact of the leadership program -- will these young women go on to become leaders in college, in their careers, in their fields -- we are able to ascertain short-term impact. Using a slightly modified version of McCormick and Wolf's model for intervention programs, we can suggest that our program was successful at increasing the awareness of the need for women in leadership positions, encouraging young women to seek opportunities for leadership, and increasing self-confidence.

Figure 1
Committee Choices

Local Hero Award: Students study community leaders who have impacted the community. They develop criteria for an award, interview nominees from the community, and present the award at the program's culminating event.

Multimedia/Video Project: Students develop a script and assemble footage for presentation at the program's culminating event.

Thematic Slide Show: Students select a contemporary song and coordinate slides that have been taken by participants throughout the program to create a thematic slide show for presentation at the Open House.

Program Journal: Students gather participants' reactions to program events which will then be interpreted for a program journal distributed to all participants.

T-shirt Development: Students develop an original design that communicates the theme of the program and which is artistically rendered as a souvenir for each participant.

Open House: Students will be responsible for developing the format and content of the culminating event for parents.

Women's Awareness Project: Students develop a plan for hosting a women's awareness event at their respective schools for the upcoming school year.

Table 1
Impact of the Leadership Program
as Reported by the Participants and Their Parents

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with a series of statements using a five item Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

	% students who strongly agree (n=20)	% of parents who strongly agree (n=22)
Increased interest in women's issues	55%	41%
Positively impacted sense of ethics	45%	77%
Increase interest in world affairs	20%	23%
Improved leadership skills	55%	46%
Did program impact expectations of participant	85% (Yes)	82% (Yes)
Empowered participants to feel they could address & impact issues they were concerned about	50%	41%
Increased self-confidence	40%	50%
Overall impact of the program on participant	70% (strongly positive)	60% (strongly positive)

References

AAUW Educational Foundation. (1992). *The AAUW report: How schools shortchange girls*. Washington, DC: AAUW Education Foundation.

Brown, L.M. & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Buescher, T. (1991). Gifted adolescents. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (eds.), *The handbook of gifted education* (pp. 382-401). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Chodorow, N. (1979). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Gilligan, C. (1981). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*.. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

McCormick, M.E. & Wolf, J.S. (1993). Intervention programs for gifted girls. *Roeper Review, 16* (2), 85-88.

Reis, S.M. (1991). The need for clarification in research design to examine gender differences in achievement and accomplishment. *Roeper Review, 13*(4), 193-198.

Ruddick, S. (1987). Remarks on the sexual politics of reason. In E.F. Kittay & D.T. Meyers (Eds.), *Women and Moral Theory* (pp. 237-260). Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield.

Silverman, L. (1993). Social development, leadership and gender. In L. Silverman (ed.), *Counseling the gifted and talented* (pp. 291-327). Denver: Love Publishing Company.